

ADULT EDUCATION

According to the 2000 Census, Kentucky has over 2.6 million citizens over the age of 25, and 685,000 of them, or 25.9 percent, do not have a high school diploma or GED. Kentucky ranks 49th in the nation on this measure.

The 1995 Kentucky Adult Literacy Survey indicated that 14 percent (340,000) of working age Kentuckians function at Literacy Level 1 and another 26 percent (656,000) of Kentucky adults are at Level 2. In other words, 40 percent of the working age population in Kentucky is functioning at the lowest levels of literacy. Yet only 50,000 people, or 5 percent of that population, were enrolled in adult education services in 2000.

In 2000, the Kentucky General Assembly passed *The Adult Education Act*. The legislation made the Council on Postsecondary Education the governing body for adult education. The council, in partnership with the Workforce Development Cabinet Department for Adult Education and Literacy, was charged with creating an adult education strategic agenda, including an accountability system to increase enrollment and improve performance of the system. The Department for Adult Education and Literacy administers the local adult education programs.

The strategic agenda, An Agenda for Adult Education in Kentucky, calls for moving the system from 50,000 students in 2000 to 100,000 students in 2004; and 300,000 in 2010. In 2000-01, enrollment reached over 62,000 adults. In 2001-02, it increased to over 86,000.

Other goals include increasing the number of GED credentials issued each year as well as increasing the college-going rate of GED graduates. The percentage of graduates going on to postsecondary education increased from 12 percent in 1998 to 17 percent in 1999.

An additional goal is to decrease the number of adults functioning at low levels of literacy. Literacy rates will decrease in levels 1 and 2 from 40 percent to 37 percent by 2004 as measured by the Kentucky Adult Literacy Survey.

This agenda lays the groundwork for the 20-year strategic plan by addressing nine areas:

1. Public Communication Plan
2. New Opportunity Grants
3. Economic Development and Workforce Training Matching Program
4. Local Needs Assessment and Community Development
5. Professional Development
6. Statewide Information Technology and Distance Learning
7. Tuition Discounts and Employer Tax Credits
8. Statewide Competency-Based Certification for Workplace Skills
9. Base Funding, Performance, and Rewards

Questions Governing Board Members Might Ask

1. How many GED graduates attend our institution?
2. What are we doing to recruit more GED graduates?
3. In what ways do we support nontraditional students?